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choice of cultural elements to be revived and perpetuated. Countless forms of peasant culture, many of which are still widespread, have come to be demeaned and even their existence denied by the more militant nativists. The attitude of these persons toward traditional songs, dances, and sports such as hurling is quite at variance with that toward matchmaking in courtship and the belief in fairies, ghosts, and witches. It is the prevalence of such customs as the latter in rural Ireland which has been largely responsible for bringing the term peasant into such disrepute.

Some of the extreme points of view held by Irish nativists are: the Irish today are a "pure" Celtic "race" and possess psychological and behavioral traits which are "racially" rooted, including even a "racial memory;" Celtic civilization developed before and was "superior" to Greek and Roman civilizations, and the Irish branch of European civilization during the Middle Ages was "advanced" over those of other European societies; the Irish literary tradition has been "richer" and of greater esthetic "worth" than other European traditions of the past; the Irish language is a more effective communicator of ideas than other languages (especially English) and mirrors the distinctive Irish or Celtic "personality," "spirit," or "soul;" in order to achieve national identity, unity, and greatness, the Gaelic tongue once again must be spoken universally in the nation; and, Ireland is the "most Catholic" of all countries—in historical tradition, strength of belief, and morality. Inis Beag folk have been singled out for adulation by nativists because they are Gaelic speakers, pious Catholics, and believed to be lineal decendants of Celts who lived in the island two millennia ago. Their character is thought to embody those traits of ancient origin held in highest esteem by the Irish: spirituality, independence, self-reliance, industriousness, strength, courage, imaginativeness, sanity, and emotional stability.

Nativism has had a profound impact both on government policies affecting Inis Beag and other Gaeltacht communities, and on the interpretations of the Inis Beag milieu by writers and film, radio, and television producers. The extensive services and subsidies afforded the islanders reflect, in part, the nativistic outlook of the government; it is hoped that they will halt emigration and preserve the Irish tongue and other valued cultural forms which are preserved here but are disappearing rapidly from the rest of the country. Nativism also has caused artists, who have most observed and publicized the folk, to distort the Inis Beag way of life in their works. Too often they have been unaware of, ignored, exaggerated, or misinterpreted beliefs and behavior so as to present a desired picture of the folk, one in keeping with the nativistic stereotype.

Distortions of Inis Beag culture also have been caused by primitivism—the idealization of past or future cultural estates or of contemporary primitive and folk cultures. Like nativism, it provides psychological compensation for frustrations created by personal or social disorganization. Its origins are manifold and can be traced back to antiquity, but in its modern guise it is an amalgam of utopianism since the sixteenth century, Enlightenment views of "natural man," rural attitudes toward urban life since the industrial revolution, Marxian socialism, late nineteenth-century cultural evolutionism, and early twentieth-century ethnology. Central to the primitivistic position is the belief that civilization has dehumanized man and undermined his valued institutions; it has caused social bonds to disintegrate,

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number was reduced to only 580,000. The great famine of 1845 to 1852 and the tide of emigration which followed brought about a rapid decline in the use of the language. In addition, the elementary school system was directed toward substituting English for Irish, and until 1922 instruction in most schools was given in the English tongue. It was reported in 1946 that only about 40,000 persons in the Republic used Gaelic as their true vernacular (Freeman 1960:166–169).

All Inis Beag folk of the age of eight years and older speak English as well as Irish, many with greater fluency than mainland peasants, for English is taught in the school and is spoken with Gaelic in homes where a realistic attitude toward emigration prevails. As in most of Ireland before 1922, English was employed as the medium of instruction in the school, and sermons in the church were delivered in English; even today the islanders confess to their priests in English—a fact little known. The widespread ability of the folk to use English is not readily apparent, however, for several reasons: the people are subsidized by the government to have their children learn Irish at school, and curates have urged, even threatened, that the foreign tongue not be spoken on moral and nativistic grounds; teachers have ridiculed English speech idiosyncracies of certain students and adult islanders before their pupils and, as a result, have induced shyness among the youth; the secretiveness of many persons and suspicion of outsiders of others prevent them from revealing their linguistic aptitudes to strangers; a few folk are nativists themselves and shun the use of English for that reason; and, finally, I have witnessed islanders "cod" (jokingly misinform) outsiders as to the true language situation.

The English speech of the islanders, as is common throughout rural Ireland, represents a syncretism of Gaelic and English forms; that is, English vocabulary is merged with Irish grammar, and Gaelic phonemes and speech rhythms influence English pronunciation. Irish terms commonly are incorporated into English speech, and, conversely, English words form an important part of the vocabulary of the folk when they employ the vernacular. Nativists are extremely critical of English vocabularly borrowings, a point of view not shared by the islanders; the latter are equally critical of the creation of new Gaelic terms by nativists for cultural innovations. The folk, among themselves, also are critical of the language revival movement, since most of their number must emigrate to English speaking countries where lack of mastery of the tongue places them at a competitive disadvantage. Irish speech is judged by nativists as "good" or "bad" according to at least three criteria: the prevalence of despised English words, the retention of traditional Gaelic terms, and the richness of Irish idiom. Many observers, including linguists, believe that the "best" Gaelic in Ireland is spoken in Inis Beag and nearby islands; however, my wife and I had visitors from the mainland who were declared to be more proficient Irish speakers than the island folk themselves by Inis Beag people who met and talked with them. In this case, probing revealed that the evaluation was based on our friends' mastery of idiomatic expression and clarity of pronunciation. The ability of the native speaker to combine accent and idiom is known as *blas*, and the folk can ascertain readily whether a stranger has learned Gaelic "from the cradle" or "at the school" (called "Christian Brothers' Irish" after teachers of that order).

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turies afterward, and still do in modified form, and became embodied in the medieval culture which was shaped by internal innovation and borrowing from other European traditions. Christianity came to Inis Beag in the early decades of the sixth century. Inis Beag and the other islands in the vicinity became one of the famous monastic centers of Ireland, where over a hundred saints lived or paid extended visits. Among them were St. Enda of the Aran Islands, St. Columbkille who was to Christianize Scotland and much of England, St. Kieran the founder of Clonmacnoise, St. Brendan the Navigator who according to Irish legend reached the coast of Florida in 551, and St. Kevin the founder of Glendalough. Among the principal medieval Christian monuments in Inis Beag are three churches, one and possibly two monasteries, several tombs, and a sacred well.

Only a single female saint is associated with Inis Beag, and a church in her honor stands on the northwest side of the island. Although not the first church on the site, the present building was erected not later than the ninth century, and west of its doorway under a cliff is the foundation of a *clochán* in which the officiating clergyman may have resided. South of the church are a number of ancient tombs, and in a small valley east of it a layer of midden lies beneath manufactured soil. The axe heads were unearthed in the valley only a stone's throw from the church.

Built in the tenth century to honor the patron saint of the island, a second church is located atop a terrace overlooking the beach on the northeast side of Inis Beag. It was used as the regular place of worship until about 1840, when sand began to accumulate about it; at that time, the island cemetery was on a slight hill west of the church, but as the sand grew deeper burials were made next to the church, eventually to form the present cemetery which rings the building almost completely. The tomb of the patron saint stands on the surface of the terrace a short distance from the church, but it and the building nearly to the top of its gables are buried in the sand (see Fig. 3). Each year on June 14th island men dig out the interior of the church and bare the tomb to commemorate the saint. A huge midden, partially covered with sand and solidified to a conglomerate below its surface, is banked against the terrace on the north and measures 20 feet in depth, 150 feet in width, and 450 feet in length. It represents the accumulation of hundreds of years, and possibly thousands if pagan structures antedated Christian ones.

A third church lies buried beneath the sand close to the east end of the beach, and is named after another saint who is believed to be interred near it. Only legend supports its existence, for there is no reference to its unencumbered appearance in the writings of the earliest visitors in the mid-seventeenth century. However, funeral processions bound from the present church to the cemetery leave the main trail to follow what is apparently an archaic predecessor deep in the sand, and at one point the coffin is lowered and the mourners kneel and pray for the soul of the deceased at the place where tradition asserts that the ancient church lies. This custom is disconcerting to the newly appointed or visiting priest, who sometimes when leading a funeral procession will continue on the modern path while the islanders desert him to obey a centuries old prescription.

On the west side of Inis Beag, near the shore, are located a holy well named after a saint and the *clochán* in which he supposedly dwelled during a lengthy stay

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It is not the formal system of local and national governments which exerts the most control over the behavior of Inis Beag islanders, but rather the church whose clerical representatives impose supernatural sanctions more potent than the threat of extermination. Indeed, because of the marked theocratic tendencies of the church in the Republic, and the all-powerful political role played by the clergy in Inis Beag, it is tempting to label the church a formal agency of social control. The island certainly comprises a primary group in the sociological sense, with its diminutive size and population, and the sanctions imposed by the folk on one another sometimes rival in effectiveness those of the parish priest and curate.

The widespread peasant trait of dependence together with hostility toward government is most pronounced in Inis Beag. Aid in a variety of forms constantly is sought and even expected as an obligation, or "right," of the government by the islanders (especially since nativism engendered by the Gaelic Revival has made Inis Beag "the darling of the Gaeltacht," to quote a Dublin scholar who is a bitter foe of the language movement), but they are either apathetic or antagonistic toward the local and central governments. When asked to account for their anti-government sentiment, the folk of Inis Beag cite most often the commonplace nepotism and corruption practiced by functionaries, the slight differences between the platforms of the major Irish parties—Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, the promises made by politicians which seldom are kept when they achieve office, the misapplication of programs once implemented, the inadequacy of government services, the burden of increasing taxation and inflation, and "foolish" government projects in Inis Beag, more often than not instituted without consulting the islanders.

Today, the folk seldom pay heed to election promises, but once their votes were commanded by politicians who put forth grandiose plans for the betterment of local conditions—such as lengthening the present jetty or constructing another to accommodate the steamer, and connecting the fresh water lake with the sea to form a sheltered harbor for trawlers—which never were realized. Popular subjects of conversation are the shortcomings of the postal, medical, transport, and other services, and the steady increase of taxes—on stout and tobacco in particular—and the price of imported turf. Among the government projects criticized by the islanders are seaweed drying structures and lime kilns which seldom or never have been used, road improvements made where they were not needed and not made where they were needed, and the new school and jetty whose sites were misplaced by civil servants who failed to seek local advice as to the vagaries of wind and tide. The school is in danger of becoming inundated with sand from the common land, and is near the strand where activities distract the attention of the pupils; and the pier is not located in the most protected position that the coastline affords. Anti-government feeling is but a part of a much broader anti-authority configuration, which extends to the clergy, to high status folk, and even to parent-child and sibling relationships within the family. It has been for many centuries a component of Irish basic personality structure and has had momentous repercussions on the course of Irish history.

The political apathy of the islanders is revealed in their voting behavior and their knowledge of political figures and issues. Election of councillors to the county council takes place every two years, and election of members to the Dail

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779 114 The role of the church in Irish history has been well documented, albeit often in a biased manner because of the prejudices of certain historians, but its role in shaping Irish culture and personality has been little examined. Irish social scientists either have been oblivious to it because of being Catholics themselves, or have been fearful of the political and religious consequences were they to pursue and publish the "truth;" foreign scientists, on the other hand, have shown little interest in Ireland, or have suppressed their data on religious influences in order to be able to return there to do further research.

779 815 Whereas in developing countries anthropologists are being restricted increasingly by elitists sensitive to the primitive conditions in their nations which are being studied and publicized by scientists, in Ireland similar reactions of nativists, including those who are in the government, are compounded by those of the church. The resistance of the church to objective scrutiny in large measure explains the absence of ethnology—with its emphasis on such values as empiricism, naturalism, relativism, and pluralism—as a discipline in the national universities. Irish scholars have tended to stress economic and other monistic causes (especially climate, race, English oppression, the famine, and loss of the Irish tongue) in their [123] analyses of culture and personality phenomena. I have talked with Irish scientists about religious forces as aspects of particular phenomena, and have been told that to acknowledge certain of these in print would be to commit job suicide. [122] When I have discussed with them my own conclusions about factors accounting for such conditions in Inis Beag as celibacy, late marriage, personality disorders, and emigration, and have cited religious causes as among the most significant ones, my listeners have agreed tacitly and changed the subject, or have remained silent. Irish scientists visiting the United States, I might add, usually endorse my views but often ask not to be quoted abroad or in print. Religious causes are, in fact, so important and pervasive that one runs the risk of being declared a "religious determinist" if he deals objectively with his materials.

193 The bishop and the parish priest in theory direct the actions of the curate in Inis Beag, but it is believed by the folk that their control over him in reality is only nominal, and that he often is able to make and carry out major decisions affecting the welfare of the islanders without consulting his superiors. His supposed freedom of action is reflected in the commonly voiced complaint that if word of his secular "excesses" were to reach the bishop, he would be reprimanded or replaced. However, some say that his policies are known and secretly approved [123] of by his superiors. It is rumored that I was responsible for the replacement of a curate by complaining of his opposition to my research and certain of his excesses to mainlanders who had the "ear of the bishop."

779 793 795 181 [789] [795] The folk are devoutly Catholic, despite the fact that they are extremely critical of their priests and retain and reinterpret pagan religious forms. They are proud of their strength of belief, with its attendant morality, and of the sanctity of "Inis Beag of the Saints," and they look to the curate for spiritual comfort, as well as political guidance in several spheres, and are uncomfortable in his absence. His presence, it is believed, provides supernatural protection for the island, while his absence invites possible anti-social behavior, and harm to the soul of one who

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dies suddenly and is deprived of Extreme Unction at his deathbed. The compensatory rite performed later for the deceased who has been interred while the curate was away is thought to be less efficacious in shortening the stay of the soul in Purgatory.

In the past, the amount of social control exerted by clerics has varied; a few have been concerned mostly with fulfilling their religious duties, but the greater number have attempted in a variety of ways to regulate the lives of the islanders —to restrict such activities as visiting, gossiping, courting, dancing, and drinking spirits. The curates have tried, in general, to maintain the indigenous culture, especially the Gaelic tongue, and to discourage change, halt emigration, maintain the moral standards of the folk, and limit anti-social behavior. I have heard both islanders and curates defend the *status quo* in Inis Beag, including its poverty, by asserting that, "This life is of no importance, and its suffering must be borne for the glory of Heaven to come." In the absence of local police, curates sometimes have performed the functions of *gardaí*, and since 1960 have combatted a growing rash of juvenile delinquency, which has included, among other misdeeds, the destruction of property outside of homes in which parties are held, petty theft, and molestation of girls from the mainland who visit during the summer.

The techniques of social control utilized by curates are many and mostly negative; they include weekly sermons, lectures to students in the school, talks with individuals who need guidance or reprimand, the use of informers (a word so detested in Ireland that I have substituted respondent for informant in this book) and confessions, the allocation of indulgences, and, in extreme cases, the refusal of sacraments and the placing of curses. It is difficult to overestimate the degree of fear of the clergy and anti-clericalism which have been inculcated among the folk by the more immoderate measures employed by priests during the last century. Sermons deal both with spiritual messages based on the scriptures and church pronouncements, and with instruction and censure directed toward past or anticipated actions of the islanders in concert or of particular persons. Talks with individuals may take place in their or the curate's home, and often result from information received by the priest from informers or the confessional. The informers, it is said, are usually the housekeeper of the curate and her family, and children who are intimidated by the priest to reveal talk and behavior of their parents and others; however, certain folk are known to bear tales to the clergy and are shunned for this reason. Well aware of the power that the confessional gives the priest over their lives, islanders are outspoken in its condemnation, and many will not confess particular sins, especially those of a sexual nature, to a curate known to assign severe penances and to carry matters beyond the confessional.

The awarding of indulgences represents a positive social control method and has been used frequently, I was told, to obtain needed monetary contributions and services from the folk. Although the priest cannot excommunicate a recalcitrant parishioner, he can achieve the same objective by forbidding confession and absolution and the other sacraments to him, and the islanders report its threat and use as a sanction on several occasions in the past. Even more feared is the "priest's curse," which in Co. Clare ". . . can bring ruin upon a prosperous house; can turn an unbeliver's head upon his shoulders; strike blindness . . ." (Arensberg 1937:28).

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• 779 The islanders know little of church dogma and the purport of rituals and feast days. What knowledge they do possess often is distorted, and they seldom read the Bible or manuals of instruction or engage in doctrinal discussions among themselves. I discovered by consulting priests and church histories, dictionaries, and exegeses—both before and during my stay in Inis Beag—that I came to know far more about the faith than any of the folk, and I sometimes imparted what I had learned to the curious in homes and even in the pubs. Instruction is welcomed by the islanders, but they dislike criticism from any quarter of their idiosyncratic Catholic observances, pagan retentions and reinterpretations, and non-Christian behavior. They also dislike being told, especially by returned emigrants, that "Catholic culture" in Ireland is quite unlike that in other parts of the world and arouses dismay and even incredulity in many foreign Catholics who visit Ireland.

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771 793 776 165 The paths to salvation, according to the islanders, are threefold: obeying the curate, performing the rituals of the church diligently and punctiliously, and conforming to the moral laws of Christianity. Being saved, however, is to them much more a matter of escaping Hell than of achieving Purgatory and eventually Heaven, and they experience more anxiety about failing to conform to the moral laws than pride in conforming to them. Furthermore, it is sins of thought rather than sins of deed which preoccupy them. While they boast of their morality as expressed in behavior, they labor under a heavy burden of guilt arising out of repressed sexual desires, jealousy and envy of their neighbors, and anti-clerical sentiment, among other attitudes. It is difficult for most of them to confess these to the priest, and thus their feelings of guilt and fear of damnation are compounded. Many times in Inis Beag I heard a "good Catholic" defined as one who "thinks mostly of death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell" and guides his conduct accordingly. Life on earth is regarded as merely a brief prelude to the "eternity stretching beyond the grave," to be lived only in preparation for the Day of Judgment and borne patiently in all its "pain and suffering." Priests and nuns are envied for many reasons, among them the fact that they can "spend most of their time preparing for death" and thus are in a better position to achieve salvation.

771 562 [829] [788] It is apparent to outside observers and to the folk alike that women are more pious than men. They attend church more regularly, are more serious of mien at mass and during other religious observances, and are more prone to talk of religious matters than men. Many women go to mass daily, and it is said that all of the women of the island, but only ten men, have evaded going to Hell magically by attending mass nine Fridays in succession after Ash Wednesday (or, according to some, the first Friday in each month for nine successive months, or the first Friday after Ash Wednesday for nine years in succession). The reasons for this are several, but the most important are that women are less contented than men and thus have a greater need for the solace that religion affords, and they are more restricted socially than men and by fulfilling various church obligations can escape household confinement and interact with other women. Some islanders are thought to be overly pious—"wear their religion on their sleeves"—and are subjects of amusement and derision; those who use piety to cloak avarice

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persons considered overly superstitious. Interesting to note here is the fact that even before the beginning of this century, strength of belief in the pagan supernatural varied among the folk.

Three water dwellers found in the ocean surrounding Inis Beag are the mermaid, sea spirit, and water horse. At least one and maybe three mermaids are associated with particular locations along the coastline of the island. This spirit usually is found sitting on a rock with her fish tail in the water and combing her long hair, although she has been seen hovering over the surface of the sea in a "robe of mist." Discussion of her in the pubs always induces embarrassment among the men, because her perfectly formed female upper body is nude and not always hidden by her tresses; she appears to delight in exposing herself to the puritanical folk. The sea spirit is called the "headless body" for the reason that his seaweed covered hulk lacks any appendages. Like the seal who bears a human soul, he favors following in the wake of *curach*—bobbing up and down in the water and staring balefully at the seamen with huge eyes. Only by dropping an object containing gold into the ocean deeps, which the spirit finds irresistible, can his pursuit be impeded short of rowing back to the island. My wife and I brought to Inis Beag a foot-high statue of a troll, purchased two years before in Norway, made of moss with large glass eyes, which we hung from the wall of our kitchen (as we had from the dashboard of our car) as a good luck charm. It aroused excitement among fishermen who visited us because of its resemblance to the headless body; one man reasoned that this being must inhabit all of the northern seas, and probably arouses equal consternation among Scottish and Scandinavian seafarers. The water horse is a demon counterpart of the mermaid, with black body of a steed and tail of a giant fish. Until 40 years ago, it lived in the fresh water lake of Inis Beag, where it was seen on certain nights traveling abreast the surface with its head held high and mane waving in the wind. Now it is seen only at sea and infrequently at great distance.

The single pookah of Inis Beag resides in a Copper-Bronze Age tumulus (see Fig. 12), which became a medieval cemetery with rough headstones still in place; located on the western margin of the common land, it is known as the Hill of Ferns. In the Middle Ages, the church urged systematic reinterpretation of Christian and pagan elements (It was advocated as early as 601 by Pope Gregory VII in a letter to priests who were proselytizing the primitive Britons.). This policy is attested in Inis Beag and neighboring islands not only by Christian graveyards being located contiguous to pagan ones, but by Christian church buildings incorporating Druidic temples and Celtic holy wells being appropriated by Christian worshippers. During the day, the "dog of the tumulus," as this demon is called, will twist the limbs of unwary individuals who chance to fall asleep on the mound, and at night it is known to race across the sands of strand and common land, altering its size at will from that of a small dog to that of a bull, to frighten those who might be passing. It appears that Irish emigrants carried both the mermaid and pookah abroad with them as early as the seventeenth century, at least to the West Indies. In doing research among the "Black Irish" of Montserrat during 1965, 1966, and last year, I discovered a mermaid with white skin who guards a pot of gold buried on top of Chance's Mountain, and a pookah in the form of a

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rejuvenate the moribund tradition. However, several men past the age of 40 years still are able to perform jigs, reels, hornpipes, and hop-jigs with dexterity, "when the humor is on them," and are called out at parties and in the pubs; a few women will step dance in their homes or at small social gatherings.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the rigid body and arms of the step dancer are an early nineteenth century product of Jansenist doctrine in the church, which attempted to desexualize dancing. Most of the movement is below the hips of the dancer, and it is the feet of the performer which are watched intently by the audience, at least openly. Inis Beag men move their upper bodies and arms more than is customary on the mainland, and they are not as graceful as other Irish dancers.

Figure dancing is called "set" dancing in Ireland, and there are many such dances, each of which combines a number of simple and complex figures performed by the couples. There is only one set in Inis Beag; it bears no name and is danced by one or more groups of four couples each. The many figures of the dance are simple, and it takes about 20 minutes to complete. I have heard young dancers complain at the end of a night of the tediousness of the single set, and some of them are learning other Irish figures at language school dances—"The Walls of Limerick" and "The Bridge of Athlone," among others. The most enjoyed movement of the local set is the one at the end in which the man holds his partner closely and twirls her almost violently, sometimes for longer than is prescribed so that the musician must pause or alter his rhythm. With bodily contact between partners otherwise so limited, perhaps this figure allows the expression of repressed sexuality.

Parties

It is appropriate to describe the Inis Beag party and a festive night at the pub in this chapter, because they are esthetic as well as social events, in which are combined storytelling, music, song, and dance. Parties are very much the same, whether held in the winter or the summer or to welcome home a long departed emigrant or to "drag home" a new bride. Only two rooms of the house are utilized —the kitchen and "the room" adjoining it—and benches are placed along the walls to supplement the chairs and bed on which guests will sit. The barrel or two of stout to be served is placed in the back hall off the kitchen, if there is such a hall, or in a back corner of the kitchen, and one man is assigned the task of dispensing the drink and remaining at his post throughout the night. Another man acts as "pourer" and fills a bucket from which he pours the stout into several mugs and glasses which are circulated from man to man. A bottle of whiskey is opened and proffered only to the old men, who often sit in a group beside the fireplace and exchange anecdotes and tales. On a table in "the room" are placed bottles of wine and soft drinks to accommodate the women and non-drinkers among the men before and after refreshments are served. Sometimes an elderly woman will drink surreptitiously of the whiskey or stout, and it is customary for the musicians and those who sing and step dance the most to be awarded extra amounts of stout. Women

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[For information pertaining to the historical background of Irish national character and personality development, the relation to sexual repression and theological dogma, see 17: Messenger, ER6 Rural Irish, category 116, pp. 20-27.]

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regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub. Both step- and set-dancing are practiced in Inis Beag, although the former type is dying out. This rigid-body dancing, from which sex is removed by shifting attention below the hips, appears to have originated in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. The set patterns keep partners separated most of the time; but, even so, some girls refuse to dance, because it involves touching a boy. Inis Beag men, while watching a woman step-dance, stare fixedly at her feet, and they take pains to appear indifferent when crowding at a party necessitates holding women on their laps and rubbing against them when moving from room to room. But they are extremely sensitive, nevertheless, to the entire body of the dancer and to these casual contacts, as are the women. Their covert emotional reactions (which become overt as much drink is taken) are a form of catharsis.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS HISTORICAL CAUSES

Analysts of Irish character have put forth various hypotheses to account for sexual repression, ranging from the sophisticated to the absurd. The former can be classified under three rubrics: historical (e.g., the influence of ascetic monasticism, Augustinianism, and Jansenism), sociocultural (e.g., the Oedipus complex in the Irish family and male solidarity), and psychological (e.g., masochism). Beyond serious scientific consideration are such hypotheses as the loss of the Irish tongue, lack of a Catholic aristocracy, fear of Protestant libertinism, and the ever-appealed-to factors of race, climate, and the famine. In the following paragraphs, I will quote excerpts from Irish authors and from critical observers of the Irish scene, including social scientists, rather than dissect their views myself.

Paul Blanshard, in his polemical but insightful (and, in my estimation, often understated) work, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, says that "whatever the explanation, the total sexual expression of the Irish people is much less than it is in other countries, and that the Catholic crusade against normal sexual life has actually created a nation of men and women who try to drown their fundamental instincts." In attempting to account for sexual repression on such a scale, he writes:

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Ireland was . . . one of the world's most ascetic countries, and the monastic ideal has undoubtedly left a deep mark on the Irish mind. Although Irish priests were permitted to have wives as late as the eighth century, sexual renunciation came to be identified with virtue and distinction in the community, and thousands of the best men and women lived apart from each other. Kevin Devlin in his *Christus Rex* article on "Single and Selfish" . . . says of the ancient Irish that "when they 'fell in love with Christianity' . . . they took to the ideal of virginity with a Pauline enthusiasm unknown elsewhere. St. Patrick himself noted this with an inflection of surprise in the *Confessions* . . ." (Blanshard 1954: 160–161).

Several Irish scholars since 1955 have expressed the opinion in personal conversations that the rapidity of Irish conversion to monasticism in the early medieval period can be attributed, in large measure, to masochism. [53] This ancient character trait is most evident in the projective system of early Irish verbal art, if one discounts the possibility of widespread distortion through the actions of Celtic defense mechanisms and later revisionists.

In a recent book, the impact of Augustinianism at this time and in the centuries to come is examined by Fr. Alexander Humphreys. He says in *New Dubliners:*

> The specific doctrinal tradition to which Ireland and the Irish countryman in particular has fallen heir is the Augustinian. . . . [It] lays relatively greater emphasis on the weakness and evil to which human nature is prone as the result of original sin. By the same token, it attributes relatively less efficacy to natural knowledge and human action and relatively more validity to God's revelation and more power to the action of God's grace. . . . [The] Irish countryman has acquired a more than average distrust of native human reason. As a Catholic he cannot and does not deny the validity of rational thought, but he tends to be quite suspicious of the pride of the mind and so wary of ultimate rationalism that he shies away from reasoned discussions of high truths. . . . The tradition he inherits tends toward a certain historical and theological positivism in regard to the major truths and values of life, and, together with other historical factors, has led him to an intensified reliance upon the teaching power of the Church as voiced by the clergy. At the same time, while appreciating the need for positive good works, he is inclined to place relatively greater emphasis on those which are directly concerned with obtaining grace and relatively lesser store by simple ethical behaviour. And finally, although he is certain that man's bodily nature with its emotions is at root good, he is rather more suspicious of it and deals with it somewhat more severely. As a result he inclines to a jaundiced view of sex and a generally ascetic outlook which

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places a high premium upon continence, penance and, in most spheres of life, on abstemiousness (Humphreys 1966: 25–26).

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Humphreys further points out that "the effects of the religious tradition of the Irish, let alone of the countryman, upon the social behavior and attitudes of the people has never been systematically studied from a sociological point of view." He notes that the classic study, *Family and Community in Ireland*, by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, based on research done over thirty years ago, "leaves the matter virtually untouched," and "attributes the countryman's attitude towards sex almost exclusively to the structure of life in the rural community."

> Granted the profound influence social structure has on such a basic matter, a purely structural-functional analysis is hard put to explain adequately the quite ascetic sexual morality of the Irish countryside. . . . [An] attitude similar to that of the countryman is far from uncommon in a city such as Dublin—and among New Dubliners and Old Dubliners to boot—whose social structure differs so radically from that of the countryside. Structural-functional explanations of attitudes do hold up to a point. But world-views and their ethical consequences also have their special effect (Humphreys 1966: 24–27).

Monasticism and Augustinianism certainly "set the stage" for later Jansenism, although all three probably are connected with basic Irish culture and personality traits of long standing.

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Jansenism is succinctly placed in its historical context in Ireland by Joe McCarthy.

> Like most everything in Ireland, the severe strictness of the old-time Catholic clergymen was rooted in historical events of the country's past. During the dark era of the anti-Catholic Penal Laws in the 18th Century, young Irishmen had to study for the priesthood on the Continent. In the early 1790's, the British Government became alarmed by the rise of Theobald Wolfe Tone's Irish Protestant revolutionary movement and made hurried bids of appeasement to Irish Catholics in an effort to win their loyalty. One of these conciliatory moves was the establishment of the Catholic theological seminary at Maynooth in 1795. Perhaps not entirely by accident, the faculty of the new college was staffed by refugees from the French Revolution, promonarchy theologians who hated Tone's republican ideas. Most of these theologians had been influenced by Jansenism—the rigid and gloomy doctrine, denounced as Calvinistic by the Jesuits, that man is a helplessly doomed being who must endure punishing soul-searching and rigorous penances to prove his love of God. Mere faith and constant church-going . . . are not

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enough to win salvation. . . . Thanks to the influence of the French theologians at Maynooth, most of the Irish Catholic hierarchy sided with the British against Tone in the rebellion of 1798, and supported Prime Minister William Pitt's Act of Union. Their forbidding and stern Jansenist theory strongly flavored Irish Catholicism until it was finally officially discouraged in the middle of the 19th Century. The last vestiges of the doctrine have long since disappeared from Irish Catholicism, but the unusual devotion of the Irish people today to physically punishing religious pilgrimages possibly could be traced in part back to the old teaching of Maynooth that love of God must be demonstrated by harder acts than receiving the sacraments and going to daily Mass (McCarthy 1964: 78).

Our research reveals that in some areas of Ireland "the last vestiges of the doctrine" are still associated with Irish Catholicism. In fact, one Dublin social scientist with whom I correspond asserts that Jansenism as manifested in sexual repression probably reached its zenith in the 1930s and has gradually been dying out since then. However, it is still very apparent, even among "emancipated" Dubliners of the middle and upper classes.

A much harsher evaluation of Jansenism, again in an historical context, is found in Bryan McMahon's chapter in *The Vanishing Irish*, edited by Fr. John O'Brien, a collection which also includes pertinent essays by Arland Ussher and the editor himself. McMahon says:

> Associated with the heresy of Jansenism were the principles of an exaggerated moral and disciplinary rigorism under the pretext of a return to the primitive Church. The Celtic spirit, despite or rather because of its essential volatility . . . would appear to me to provide an ideal field for the culture of Jansenism. The penances of the early Celtic monks were severity itself. . . . Today, when the idea of physical penance would appear to be repugnant to the entire world, such laudable manifestations of physical denial as the exercises of Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick are beacons amid the darkness. But the danger is that by a flaw in the Celtic nature we are apt to be led by overcompensation into penitential excesses; then it is that the traits of Jansenism are there to fill lacunae in our nature. Significant in this context is the presence of four refugee doctors of the Sorbonne on the staff of Maynooth College in its early and formative years. [Their] teachings . . . cannot but have in some measure colored . . . the whole course of Irish seminary life and consequently the whole body of Irish lay thought (O'Brien 1953: 215–216).

Might not the "volatile nature" of the "Celtic spirit" and the "flaw in the Celtic nature" whose "lacunae" Jansenism fills be persistent maso-

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chism? Ussher addresses his remarks more directly to the sexual implications of Jansenism.

> Certainly the puritanic bias of the Church in Ireland surprises visitors from other Catholic communities. It is often said that Irish schools and seminaries in the last century were infected with the remnants of Jansenism. . . . The dismal fact remains that Irishmen tend to regard procreation as a shameful necessity, and Irish girls grow up to think of sex as something dark, cold, and forbidding. Statistics are scarcely available, but it seems to me that the word "dirty" is used in modern Ireland in one sense only, namely, to cover every manifestation, even the most natural, of sex passion. . . . Irish married couples seldom give the impression of being biologically satisfied or even awakened; and if they are not, it may partly account for the slovenly, listless, don't care rather than devil-may-care quality of Irish life—the "spit" but never the "polish" (O'Brien 1953: 161–162).

It is interesting to note that Ussher, an Irishman, uses the word "puritanic." I have been severely criticized by Irish readers for using it in this and previous works, since it refers to an English religious movement as well as Cromwell's party.

The editor presents an equally down-to-earth pronouncement of the effects of Jansenism.

> Here Father Murphy has singled out a factor of enormous importance in explaining the grotesque proportion of bachelors and spinsters among the Irish: the typical Irish attitude toward marriage, which, as he and many other priests have suggested, would seem to have an underlying touch of Jansenism. That attitude looks upon marriage and sex as rather regrettable necessities in the propagation of the race: it would have been much better if God had arranged for offspring in some other way. Irish parents shy away from the distasteful task of lifting the veil upon this earthy, unappetizing, and somewhat unclean subject (O'Brien 1953: 105).

The plea for a less "distasteful" manner of reproduction was actually voiced by several Inis Beag women; and most island parents do not lift the "veil," in part because of their own ignorance of sexual matters.

The impact of the Oedipus complex on Irish character has been explored by cultural analysts and writers almost from the time Freud first conceptualized the phenomenon. Indeed, Freud might have been describing Ireland rather than a particular class in Austria at the turn of the century (just as Marx might have had Ireland in mind when positing religion as the opiate of the oppressed masses). Two recent cor-

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114 troversial novels use the Oedipus complex as a focus. *Michael Joe*, by
155 William Murray, examines the role of the emasculating Irish mother, and John McGahern, in *The Dark*, probes the conflict between father and son so characteristic of Irish society.

114 One of the most penetrating studies of this sociocultural configuration, which has such momentous psychological consequences, is that of Marvin Opler and Jerome Singer, conducted among first, second, and third generation Irish male schizophrenic patients in New York hospitals. The intent of these social scientists was to determine how psychotic syndromes are culturally patterned. For a year they observed their respondents to obtain total psychiatric, anthropological, and psychological profiles. Their observations included ward scrutiny, interviews, the collection of life histories and case histories, and the administration of thirteen tests, among them the Rorschach, Thematic Apperception, Sentence Completion, and Porteus Maze. The investigators conclude that there is a continuity of Irish (and Italian) culture and personality forms among immigrants for at least three generations; their psychological findings are buttressed by research data collected in Irish and English mental institutions. My wife and I visited one of these hospitals and
[12] interviewed several Irish psychiatrists both there and in America. Our own conclusions support many of those reported by Opler, Singer, and
* 831 the psychiatrists interviewed.* Opler and Singer have the following to
15 say about the Oedipus complex in Ireland:
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> Normative cultural standards led to the hypothesis that the central female figure in the Irish family, the mother, could instil primary anxiety and fear toward female figures. . . . This hypothesis grew out of anthropological observations that the central figure in Irish families is more likely to be a controlling figure on the distaff side, while fathers, especially in straitened economic circumstances, are frequently by contrast shadowy and evanescent.
> [58] . . . An Irish male patient beset with anxiety and fear of female figures
> [838] early in life, and lacking possibilities of firm male identification with a father, would later experience the sexual repressions and socio-religious definitions of marriage and sexuality for which his culture, with its high celibacy rates, protracted engagements, and sin-guilt emphases, is justly famous. . . . all this spells a final anxious and fearful lack of positive sexual

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[815] * Irish psychiatrists in that country, England, and America are often reticent about discussing sex. Psychiatric theory in Ireland is modified by Catholic dogma,
• [779] and specialists are influenced in writings, therapy, and discussions by subtle religious and political forces, as well as by their own character structure shaped by the Irish milieu. One psychologist, well acquainted with psychiatry in Ireland, dubbed much of it "Freud with clothes on."

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539 beside them and do not really care for them at all. O'Casey's Juno offers
571 further positive support, and on the negative side, so to speak, are the
828 quantities of second-rate Irish plays and stories that have for their main-
829 spring a panic dislike of women, invariably represented as shrews, hussies, and Aunt Sallies at whom anything can be thrown. A woman has only to put her nose into a saloon bar . . . to realise that Almhuin is with us still (Coxhead 1961: 145–146).

114 In concluding this section, I would like to mention briefly an ingenious hypothesis of the cause of sexual repression in Ireland, presented by Sean de Freine in *The Great Silence*. His book is the most "convincing" expression to date of what linguists (outside of Ireland) term "language determinism," a monism still popular in that country a century after the advent of the Irish nativistic movement. Displaying a lack of knowledge both of contemporary linguistic theory and of sexual ethics in the "heart of the Gaeltacht," de Freine says:

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177 The Irish are often accused of a Jansenist approach to sex, which is supposed
178 to date from the French influence in the Irish Church in and just after the
181 penal times. But this attitude did not exist in Irish Ireland and does not
*831 exist in the Gaeltacht today. It would seem as though, when English spread
795 throughout the country, it was English Puritanism and not French Jansenism,
• 779 which brought about the change. For example, certain English words with prudish connotations were accepted, with their connotations, by the Irish, while their equivalents in Irish have no such nuances. In its English setting Puritanism was kept in reasonable check by the other native traditions: In Ireland, as the old culture died, there were no such natural checks to contain it (de Freine 1966: 164).

[128] Space does not permit me to consider other causal factors listed earlier which are equally untenable.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS INCULCATION

*831 The inculcation of sexual puritanism in Inis Beag must be examined
181 in four contexts: the role of the curate, the influence of visiting missions,
182 enculturation in the home, and what I will term "secular social control"
626 —the behavioral regulations imposed on themselves by Inis Beag adoles-

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cents and adults. It is through these agencies that Jansenism, masochism, the Oedipus complex, male solidarity, and other inextricably linked factors shape the severe sexual repression which gives rise to the cultural manifestations discussed in the last section of the chapter.

Priests of Jansenist persuasion have had subtle means of repressing the sexual instincts of the islanders in addition to the more extreme methods of controlling behavior—"clerical social control," such as employing informers, allocating indulgences, and refusing the sacraments to, and placing curses on, miscreants. Through sermons and informal classroom talks, the pulpit and the national school have served as effective vehicles of church discipline. The talks are especially telling, since they take advantage of the personality malleability of the formative years. The adult Irish person is rare who, although anticlerical, and even agnostic or atheistic, can transcend these early enculturative experiences, particularly in times of social crisis or personality disorganization. Erring islanders have often been sought out by priests and talked to privately after their ways have become known through gossip, informers, or the confessional. Some curates have suppressed courting, dancing, visiting, and other behavior either directly or "indirectly" (widely interpreted in Ireland) sexual in nature by physical action: that is, roaming the trails and fields at night seeking out young lovers and halting dancing by their threatening presence. This outward form of intrusion into island affairs is resented by most folk, as is the inward intrusion through priestly remonstrances; they question the right of the young, virginal, inexperienced, and sexually unknowledgeable curates to give advice in this sphere.

Church influence is also exerted through missions which visit Inis Beag every three to five years. On these occasions, two Redemptorist priests (occasionally Franciscans, Dominicans, or Passionists) spend a week on the island, where they conduct mass each morning and deliver long sermons in the chapel every afternoon or early evening. Everyone, even old people and mothers with young infants, is urged to attend to receive the "blessings of the mission." To some, this means shortening the time in purgatory for themselves or a deceased relative (an indulgence used to enforce church discipline). To others, absence carries with it the penalty of damnation, just as viewing an eel or small fish in the sacred well, appropriated from the Druids, promises salvation in an equally magical fashion. A mission usually has a theme, the variations of which are explored with high emotion and eloquence by the visiting clerics in